

NATIONAL REGISTER  
LISTED

MAR 23 2005

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-9000a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

**1. Name of Property**

|                        |   |
|------------------------|---|
| Historic name          | First Congregational Church               |
| Other name/site number | Brethren Church/Old Congregational Church |

## 2. Location

Street & number 502 South National Avenue ☐ not for publication

City or town Fort Scott ☐ vicinity

State Kansas Code KS County Bourbon Code 011 Zip code 66701

### 3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this ☒ nomination ☐ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property ☒ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant ☐ nationally ☐ statewide ☒ locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Christy Davis February 3, 2005  
Signature of certifying official/Title Date  
Kansas State Historical Society

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property ☐ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria. (☐ See continuation sheet for additional Comments.)

Signature of commenting official /Title \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

State or Federal agency and bureau

#### 4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is \_\_\_\_\_ Signature of the Keeper \_\_\_\_\_ Date of Action \_\_\_\_\_

- ☐ entered in the National Register. \_\_\_\_\_  
☐ See continuation sheet. \_\_\_\_\_
- ☐ determined eligible for the National Register \_\_\_\_\_  
☐ See continuation sheet. \_\_\_\_\_
- ☐ determined not eligible for the National Register \_\_\_\_\_
- ☐ removed from the National Register \_\_\_\_\_
- ☐ other, (explain:) \_\_\_\_\_

First Congregational Church  
Name of property

Bourbon County, Kansas  
County and State

## 5. Classification

### Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply)

- ☒ private  
☐ public-local  
☐ public-State  
☐ public-Federal

### Category of Property

(Check only one box)

- ☒ building(s)  
☐ district  
☐ site  
☐ structure  
☐ object

### Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

| Contributing | Noncontributing |
|--------------|-----------------|
| 1            | buildings       |
|              | sites           |
|              | structures      |
|              | objects         |
| 1            | total           |

### Name of related multiple property listing

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

N/A

### Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

N/A

## 6. Function or Use

### Historic Functions

(Enter Categories from instructions)

Religion: religious facility

### Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

Religion: religious facility

Social: civic

Recreation and Culture: music facility

## 7. Description

### Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

Late Victorian: Gothic

### Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation Stone: limestone

walls Brick

Walls Brick with limestone trim

roof Asphalt

other Wood

### Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

Name of Property First Congregational Church County and State Bourbon County, Kansas

## 8. Statement of Significance

### Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "X" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register)

- ☐ A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history
- ☐ B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- ☒ C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- ☐ D Property has yielded, or likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

### Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- ☒ A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- ☐ B removed from its original location.
- ☐ C a birthplace or grave.
- ☐ D a cemetery.
- ☐ E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- ☐ F a commemorative property.
- ☐ G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years

### Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

### Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

#### Architecture

#### Period of Significance

1873

#### Significant Dates

1873

#### Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

#### Cultural Affiliation

N/A

#### Architect/Builder

Mr. James Preston Chumlea, Fort Scott, Ks.

Mr. Warren Mikesell, Fort Scott, Ks.

## 9. Major Bibliographical References

### Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

### Previous documentation on file (NPS): Primary location of additional data:

- ☐ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- ☐ Previously listed in the National Register
- ☐ previously determined eligible by the National Register
- ☐ designated a National Historic Landmark
- ☐ recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # \_\_\_\_\_
- ☐ recorded by Historic American Engineering

Record # \_\_\_\_\_

- ☒ State Historic Preservation Office
- ☐ Other State agency
- ☐ Federal agency
- ☐ Local government
- ☐ University
- ☐ Other

Name of repository: \_\_\_\_\_

|                  |                       |
|------------------|-----------------------|
| Name of Property | Congregational Church |
|------------------|-----------------------|

County and State Bourbon County, Kansas

## 10. Geographical Data

**Acreage of Property Less than one acre**

## UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

☒ See continuation sheet

### Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

### Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

**11. Form Prepared By**

Name/title Judy Howser, Board Member

Organization Historic Preservation Assn. of Bourbon Co.

Date 04/ 19/04

Street & number 2280 Hackberry Road

Telephone 620-223-0736

City or town      Fort Scott

State Kansas

Zip code 66701

## Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

## Continuation Sheets

## Maps

A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

## Photographs

Representative **black and white** photographs of the property.

### Additional items

(Check with SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

## Property Owner

name Historic Preservation Association of Bourbon , c/o Martha Scott, President.

street & number 117 S. Main Street

telephone. 620-223-1557 (museum) or 223-1844 (Scott)

city or town      Fort Scott

state

zip code 66701

**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.).

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reduction Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503

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Function

Following is a timeline of the use of the subject church since it was built.

|                     |   |
|---------------------|---|
| 1873                | Construction of the present structure completed and used by First Congregational Church   |
| Feb 1874            | First Congregational Church dedicated and used by congregation  |
| 1916                | First Congregational Church disbanded; members joined other churches  |
| 11/15/19 – 01/04/20 | Church rented for use by First Church of the Nazarene   |
| Jan 1920            | Brethren Church occupies and uses church  |
| July 2, 1920        | Brethren Church purchases church and holds services in it for 58 years  |
| 1973                | Historical Preservation Assn. of Bourbon County (HPA) began negotiations to purchase  |
| 1973 - 1975         | Grace Moore spearheaded fund raising campaign to save church from demolition  |
| May 20, 1978        | Brethren Church ceases to occupy the church, having outgrown it   |
| June 28, 1978       | Church sold to Historical Preservation Assn. of Bourbon County  |
| 1975 – 1980         | Church undergoes restoration work, beginning with stained glass windows   |
| 1980 - present      | Sanctuary rented for weddings and church services; tours given; musical performances given there; Historical Preservation Assn. of Bourbon County holds annual meetings there |
| 1980-1990           | Education Section used by Historical Preservation Assn. as gift shop  |
| 1982 – 1987         | Church used by Christian Science Society  |
| Jan 1992 - present  | Education rooms rented to Old Fort Genealogical Society for research and meetings   |
| 1994 – present      | Sanctuary rented for use by the Church of Jesus Christ Restoration Branch congregation  |

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**Description**

The original First Congregational Church, made of wood, burned in 1872. The following year the congregation built the brick, English Gothic style church, which is the subject of this document. The church is an excellent example of the English Gothic style of architecture, with its pointed arch (lancet) windows, vaulted ceiling, steeply pitched roof and tall steeple.

The church is located on the corner of National Avenue and West 5<sup>th</sup> Street, which were named Jones and Orange Streets at the time of construction. Orange Street became 5<sup>th</sup> Street circa 1888. The church faces east (National Ave., then Jones Street), and has a small lawn and shrubbery, with a concrete walk and steps to the east and north entrances, steps to a second, unused door on the south side of the east façade, and a small garden at the rear, surrounded by a wrought-iron fence. The surrounding structures are a combination of commercial and residential buildings. The building is in good condition, on its original site, and the only change to the original design was the addition of a basement. Otherwise, only restorative work has been done on the building. In a Fort Scott Weekly Monitor article of July 6, 1876, the church was described as magnificent, and an "ornament to the city."

The First Congregational Church is the only single spire church remaining in Fort Scott, and the only English Gothic style church remaining in its original configuration. Its steeple can be seen from a distance, towering above other Fort Scott buildings. The roof is covered with laminated asphalt shingles in the "weathered wood" style to replicate the original wood shingle roof.

The sanctuary portion of the church is a single story with a timber beamed, vaulted interior ceiling that is approximately 50 ft. high. The education portion of the building in the rear is two stories, with one ground-floor and two second-floor rooms. The church has a 79-foot-spire of brick, which houses the bell tower and the bell purchased by the original congregation.

The exterior features pointed arch shaped windows (lancets) with traceries, painted wooden window frames, and pointed arch, brick lintels. Window sills are of small, smoothly cut native stone. The entrance features an ornately carved, solid wood door shaped in a pointed arch and covered by an arched wood lintel, above which is a pointed arch lintel made of brick.

After 1978, when the Historical Preservation Association of Bourbon County purchased the church, a metal plaque engraved with the year "1873" on the church façade replaced the ornate plaque added by the Brethren Church in 1920. Another plaque on the northern elevation also is engraved with the year the church was built. There are 9 original, restored memorial stained glass lancet windows that grace the sanctuary, a memorial stained glass lancet window on the north side of the entry, and 5 other lancet windows with half the panes of stained glass on the Education portion of the building. Stained glass transom windows above the north Education Section exterior door and the door between the sanctuary and the Education section were added during restoration in 1981.

The interior contains period oak pews and two original, restored diamond patterned leaded glass doors separating the foyer from the sanctuary. The church was said to be the first in Fort Scott to install a pipe organ,

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Description, Continued

which is no longer present in the building. The interior features the original molding that was hand-turned on a lathe; as well as the original gothic wainscoting, handrail, altar, and oak flooring. There also is a restored, full immersion baptismal tank with a lid that lifts.

The rock foundation is original, and partially surrounds a basement dug in 1963 by Lewis Russell, who carried out the dirt in 5-gallon buckets. Three courses of large foundation stones are visible on all sides of the building, and five rows of stone are visible on the north side of the bell tower. The red brick that covers the exterior is believed to be taken from nearby clay pits that existed in 1872-3. The brick is laid in a running bond pattern. Some replacement of concrete grout between exterior bricks, or tuck pointing has been done over the years.

**The East Elevation** of the church is the main entrance, with a concrete walkway from the street and steps to the main entrance beneath the bell tower and steeple, and there is another, smaller entrance on the left side of the main entrance. There are wrought-iron railings on either side of the steps and between the two heavy, hand carved doors. Above each door is a white blind tracery and sharply sloped, white wood hood molding. The tracery above the main entrance is a trefoil tracery, and there is a plain, single tracery at the point of the lancet. At the center of the nave façade is a large stained glass window with triple lancets and three round stained glass windows in a trefoil between the painted white wood molding and the lancets. Between the main entrance and central window is a single lancet stained glass memorial window. The exterior is red brick. There are four square brick buttresses that protrude from the church face, with white dripstones typical of the English Gothic architecture. There are shrubs beneath the center window. Historical photos show a tree in front of the building, and no shrubs. All other features are the same as the original design.

**Bell Tower.** The brick bell tower on the north side of the building is 79-feet high and houses the original bell, which is in working condition. Its base rests above the church entrance, and features two brick buttresses on each of its four exterior elevations. Its buttresses are topped with white gablets or pinnacles made of four white graduated layers, forming a pyramid shape. At the base of the tower between the buttresses there are four small brick lancets bounded by narrow white piers. Painted white wood louvres in lancets on each of the four sides of the tower allow the sound of the bell to be heard. In the early days of the church, the bell was rung as a fire alarm. A white stone blind tracery is above each lintel and below the gabled, pointed arch, white wood molding. On the pinnacle of each gable is decorative, scrolled wrought-iron work, painted white. At the very top of the spire is a weathervane, which is a replica of the original.

**The South Elevation** of the sanctuary has four inset stained glass lancet windows with white wood molding and brick lintels. The rear, Education section has two lancet windows without stained glass, and between the sanctuary and Education section, there is a small rectangular window. This elevation has five brick buttresses, each with three dripstones, next to which are downspouts from the gutters. There is a central above-ground furnace unit between the two most eastward windows (to the right when facing this elevation). Beneath the second window from the front of the building is a small basement window. A basement entrance is beneath the first window. (The basement was added in the 1960s.) A small area of grass borders the building, and trees shade the southwest corner of the church.

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**Description, Continued**

**The West Elevation** of the brick building is the rear of the two-story Education section. The second story has two plain lancet windows and a door to the fire escape. The ground level has three lancet windows with stained glass upper panes and clear glass lower panes. The lower windows are set immediately above the foundation. All of the windows on the west elevation have white painted wood moldings with brick lintels. The southwest, second-story window has a door beneath the lancet, which opens onto a black metal fire escape extending to the ground near the northwest ground level window.

The West Elevation has a buttress protruding on each corner of the wall, each with three dripstones. An electricity meter and cabling is adjacent to the north side of this elevation. A small yard with flowers and shrubs is surrounded by a decorative, black wrought iron fence erected by the Historical Preservation Association in the late 1970s. The fence is typical of those used in Fort Scott in the late 1800s.

**The North Elevation** of the brick building includes the bell tower, the sanctuary and the two-story Education Section. There are 3 lancet stained glass memorial windows on the north side of the sanctuary, and one at the base of the bell tower, which forms the church entry or foyer. Beneath the stained-glass window next to the bell tower, there is a basement window. The north side of the Education Section has three dormer windows on the second story, with the center window of slightly greater height than the others. The dormers are framed in white wood molding, as are the lancet windows. The ground floor has two lancet windows with stained glass only on the upper portion, like those on the West elevation. Below the second story window at the center of this elevation is an entrance with a carved wood door, painted white, with a double paned, stained glass transom window topped by a brick lintel. A walkway from the sidewalk leads to concrete steps with wrought-iron railings on each side. The buttresses on this elevation are of the same design as the others on the building. Five downspouts extend from the gutters on the side of the building. There is a small area of lawn alongside this elevation and between the sidewalk and 5<sup>th</sup> Street. The bell tower extends to the north from the sanctuary, and was described earlier.

**Roof.** The original roof was of wood shingles. The church roof had been previously replaced "in kind" with wood shingles by the Brethren Church and in 1975 by the Historic Preservation Association (HPA). In 1987, the steeple was re-shingled in wood. The current roof and spire shingling is of Tamko Heritage laminated asphalt shingles in the "weathered wood" style and was installed in 2002-03.

**Maintenance.** Exterior and interior wood surfaces have been painted over the years, as part of general maintenance. The brick has not been sandblasted; only parts of the grout were replaced. In 1936, 1975, and again in 1985, the steeple roof was painted. Some restorative work was done on the stained glass windows to replace small pieces and strengthen the windows in 1975. In 1985, the finial atop the spire was removed for refabricating. In 1986, a replica of the original weathervane and finial were placed atop the steeple. Other routine repairs since the structure has been owned by the HPA include re-plastering the interior ceiling to repair water damage, and repainting the interior south wall of the sanctuary.



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Description, Continued

**Interior.** The east end of the sanctuary contains a glassed-in cabinet with artifacts from the original First Congregational Church. As mentioned above, the original, restored leaded glass doors separate the foyer from the sanctuary. A plaque in the entry states that the beveled glass doors were restored in memory of James Preston Chumlea, contractor and builder, by his great-grandson David H. Chumlea and grandson Charles E. Chumlea.

There are 18 single and 9 double oak pews in the sanctuary. The walls have the original, hand-turned molding and wainscoting. The heavy beamed vaulted ceiling is 50 feet above the sanctuary floor. The floor on the west end of the sanctuary is raised, with hand carved, gothic pointed arches decorating the oak sides of the altar, and oak steps leading up to it. On the west wall, heavy Gothic, painted white beams frame the curtain, behind which janitor Billy Bowns once pumped the pipes for the organ, according to the architect's son, J. F. Chumlea. According to information attached to the pulpit now standing near the glass cases on the east side of the sanctuary, the pulpit was dedicated July 16, 1911 by the Brethren Church while located at 6<sup>th</sup> and Burke Streets and was used by the Brethren Church in the present location for 59 years. An antique lectern, circa 1875, was brought in by the HPA from the old Garland Church in 1975 and placed on the center of the altar. In 1977-78, a central, above ground furnace was installed on the south side of the building. The lower level of the Education Section was used during the 1980s and early 1990s by the Historical Preservation Association as a gift shop. Since 1992, it has been used for research by the Old Fort Genealogical Society.

**Church dimensions.** The rectangular building is approximately 78 ft. x 37.5 ft. The foyer is 8 ft., 4 in. x 9 ft., 4 in. The nave or sanctuary (including the foyer) is 56 ft., 5 in. x 37 ft., 5 ½ in. A door on the west end of the sanctuary opens to the Education section. There is a 4 ft. wide area between the sanctuary and Education section, which houses the Education section door to the north, and stairs that access the rear of the altar and the second floor of the Education section. The lower level of the Education section has one large, 31 ft., 5 ½ in. x 17 ft., 4 ½ in. room and a smaller 13 x 6 ft. storage area. The second story has a 13 ft., 7 ½ in. x 12 ft., 9 ½ in. classroom, a 22 ft., 3 in. x 22 ft., 5 in. storage room, and a 6 ft., 5 ½ in. x 9 ft., 3 ½ in. bathroom. There is an 8 ft., 5 ½ in. landing outside the door to the fire escape on the west side of the Education section. The church sits on 1 ½ city lots, measuring 75 ft. wide and 120 ft. long.

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Geographical Data

**Verbal Boundary Description:** The First Congregational Church is located on Lot 2 and the North half of Lot 4, Block 169, City of Fort Scott, Kansas, located at Latitude 37 degrees, 50 minutes, 11.5 seconds; Longitude 94 degrees, 42 minutes, 27 seconds. It is bounded by National Avenue on the east; by 5<sup>th</sup> Street on the north; and by an alley on the west, which separates the property from the rear of lots on Judson Street. On the south is the south half of Lot 4, owned by K & K Auto Parts, Inc., 524 S. National Ave., Fort Scott.

**Boundary Justification:** The boundaries above listed comprise the legal description of the property on the Kansas Warranty Deed filed May 20, 1978 and recorded in Book 171 of Deeds, page 122, Office of the Registrar of Deeds, Bourbon County, Kansas. The street address further indicates the exact location of the property. Latitude and Longitude coordinates are taken from the 7.5 minute Geological Survey Map included with this application.

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**Significance**

The First Congregational Church of Fort Scott, Kansas (c. 1873) is being nominated to the National Register under Criterion C for its architectural significance. The First Congregational Church is an excellent example of the revival of the Early English Gothic architectural style popular during late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century America and England. Between 1840 and 1870, homes and churches were built in this style, the revival of which began in England and became the dominant style, popular with Queen Victoria. Early English Gothic became the "proper" style for English churches.

This church is built with simple lines which emphasize height as a symbolic expression of religious aspiration, and is typified by pointed arches and lancet windows. The church's lancet, stained glass windows, blind and trefoil traceries, drip stones, steep roof, and 69-foot steeple typify the Early English Gothic style. The interior vaulted ceiling, with its original beams, hand turned molding, and wainscoting also reflect the style of the period.

The major distinction between the Early English and the Norman, or Romanesque period that preceded it is the use of the pointed arch (lancet). The pointed arch allowed a whole range of new building expression to take place; arches could span greater distances, allowing vaults to be taller and wider. The arch could support greater weight, allowing walls to be thinner and pierced by wider window openings. This in turn encouraged the use of stained glass. The simple buttresses of the Norman period gave way to flying buttresses, which distributed the weight and thrust of roofs and walls right down to the ground. Towers were topped with steeply pitched roofs, often surmounted with very slender towers emerging from a broach, or pyramidal base.

The introduction of the chisel allowed a great deal more artistic control, and we see undercutting become extremely popular. Carvings stand out from the underlying stone and are much more three-dimensional than in the Norman Romanesque period. Early in the 13<sup>th</sup> century, windows were primarily of a simple, untraciated (lancet) design, either single or grouped together. Where the hood molding (dripstone) followed a pointed design, echoing the lines of the windows, the architects put small ornamental holes in the space between the molding and the lancets. This approach is called Plate Tracery. As plate tracery developed, the small holes became more elaborate, evolving into ornate trefoil and quadrifoil designs.

The shift toward Gothic in church design "was in large measure the result of the revival in interest in liturgy promulgated by the Cambridge Society in England, and *The Ecclesiologist*, which it published." (Roth, p. 110-111). The Society was formed for the advancement of medieval art and architecture and had branch organizations in the United States, which spread the building of churches in the Early English Gothic style. Members identified themselves as "Ecclesiologists," and their periodical was devoted to church building, restoration, ritual, and symbolism. They felt a revival of the building arts of the Middle Ages would improve standards of architectural quality and taste, and remind the beholder of the verities of Christian religion.

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**Significance, Continued**

In America, backed by Episcopalian doctrine and led by architects Richard Upjohn and James Renwick, the Gothic Revival style had tentative beginnings in the 1830s and 1840s, was firmly established in the 1850s, and continued even after the Civil War. Upjohn (1802-78) designed this country's first important example of Gothic Revival – New York's Trinity Church, built in 1846. This church helped establish Upjohn as the dominant church architect of his time and also helped in establishing a long-time tradition of Gothic Revival as the predominant style for churches. The renown of Trinity Church brought Upjohn commissions for Gothic churches across the country. He received so many requests for plans that he published *Rural Architecture* in 1852. It contained designs for board-and-batten churches, parsonages, and schoolhouses that could be built at minimum expense.

Local contractors and country carpenters such as those who built the First Congregational Church often freely combined elements from pattern books. The design for First Congregational could have originated from such a pattern book. Even after Gothic Revival waned in popularity for residences, it continued to be favored for churches. Its identification with historic religiosity was a factor in maintaining its vigor. Many people admired the mystical, ornamental, and soaring aspects of the style.

Harvard University constructed many such buildings between 1870 and 1878, in the English Gothic style. Other examples of the revival of English Gothic architecture are All Saints Church on Margaret Street in London, built in 1849, and Keble College, Oxford, 1867-83. In Fort Scott, the existing Episcopal (circa 1858) and Presbyterian (circa 1859) churches have Gothic elements, but neither has a single, tall spire. The second Presbyterian Church built in Fort Scott was in the English Gothic style, with a tall steeple, but it is no longer standing.

**The history** of the First Congregational Church speaks to the faith, strength, and determination of early Fort Scott settlers. During 1866 through 1868, occasional services were held by Rev. J. G. Merrill of Mound City, Kansas. In 1868, J. C. Plumb, a graduate of Andover Seminary, began slated services October 11<sup>th</sup>, the first of which was held in the Old Presbyterian Church located at what is now 3<sup>rd</sup> and Main Streets. A Sunday School was formed at that time. Other sites for services during those formative years were the City Hall, sharing use with the Methodist E. Church, and McDonald Hall until January 12, 1869. At that time a council of Congregational Churches of Lawrence, Paola, Oswego, Geneva, Mound City, and Osawatomie was formed to organize the Fort Scott church. Trustees were selected, and J. C. Plumb ordained as pastor. Its 12 members began meeting in the building known as the "Seminary on Main Street."

In August 1870, the Church purchased two city lots (numbers 2 and 4) on the corner of Orange and Jones Streets (now 5<sup>th</sup> and National) from L. C. Reutchler, and building a wood frame structure began. Services were held in the lecture room on February 12, 1871, and on August 20<sup>th</sup> of that year, the new building was dedicated, complete with a brass bell. The first structure cost \$12,000 to build.

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**Significance, Continued**

A year later, the congregation suffered a devastating loss of that original wooden church, which burned to the ground on Thursday evening, March 14, 1872. The First Congregational Church Board of Trustees met on Friday morning, and decided to ask for materials to erect a temporary structure at once. "The response was prompt, general, and liberal." Overnight, materials for a temporary meeting place were donated and a meeting place built by 40 or 50 carpenters soon thereafter. (*History of Kansas*, p. 1074.) On March 16, 1872, work was begun on a temporary, 32 x 60 ft. replacement structure near the Central School, and it was finished and ready for services the following day, which was Sunday.

Construction on the present church began in August of 1872, under the auspices of building contractors Chumlea and Mikesell. As part of the fund-raising effort for the new construction, the original brass bell, which was disfigured in the fire, was cast into small memorial bells and sold. (Three such bells are on display in the glass cabinet in the sanctuary.) Due to the lack of paved roads and efficient transportation, buildings in the 1800s were made of materials close at hand. Fort Scott had a clay pit not far from the site of the church, and thus it is believed that the material for the brick exterior came from that clay pit. The present structure was completed in September of 1873 and dedicated in February of 1874. These facts speak to the perseverance and sense of community present in 1870's Fort Scott. Obviously, the intent of the congregation was to build a church of less flammable material, and one of majesty and beauty, which would reach to the heavens and last through time. In the *Fort Scott Weekly Monitor* of July 6, 1876, the First Congregational Church was called "a magnificent English Gothic church." *The Fort Scott Pioneer* of July 5, 1877 reported "... for solidity and attractiveness and in its architectural design, it is one of the best buildings in Southern Kansas and is an ornament to the City."

Rev. P. J. Warner presided over the congregation of 147 members from 1874 to 1875. According to City Directories, Rev. A. T. Waterman was pastor in 1877. Rev. W. W. Montgomery was pastor in 1879; Rev. George S. Bradley, 1883; Rev. H. A. L. King, 1885; Rev. W. J. Gray, 1888-1890; Rev. Charles N. Queen, 1893; Rev. A. O. Penniman, 1896; Rev. H. E. Mills, 1898-1902; Rev. C. A. Pillig, 1905; Rev. A. O. Penniman, 1909; Rev. H. A. Tucker, 1911; and Rev. W. F. Harding, 1916.

On December 12, 1900, Lot 2 of the Church property was sold to W. J. Moore. On December 11, 1902, W. J. Moore sold Lot 2 and the north half of lot 4 to the First Congregational Church for \$1.

In 1914, First Congregational Church membership had dwindled, and it was disbanded. Members were assimilated into the Presbyterian and Methodist congregations. On April 17, 1914, the building was deeded to the Congregational Church Building Society of New York, which in turn deeded it back to the Fort Scott group for \$1.00 with the stipulation that the building would revert back to the New York group if worship services were not held in the building for more than a year.

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**Significance, Continued**

In 1918, the steeple was reshingled. On December 13, 1919, the First Congregational Church sold the property to Kirk S. Moore, who in turn sold the property to the Brethren Church on July 20, 1920, for \$3,750.

The Brethren Church congregation occupied the building from 1920 to 1973. On August 6, 1936, the Women's Missionary Society of the Brethren Church held a successful "birthday party," during which those attending brought pennies to equal their age, to help defray the expense of the redecoration of the building. The steeple was repainted that year.

Another significant time in the life of the church began in 1973, when the Brethren Church congregation had outgrown the building and the church faced sale and demolition. Grace Moore of Fort Scott (d. 2003) began a crusade to save the church, and was instrumental in forming the Historic Preservation Association of Bourbon County in 1974. The HPA campaigned and held fund raisers for the next four years, and succeeded in purchasing the church in 1978. Through the generosity and tenacity of Fort Scott citizens, interior furnishings such as a lectern from the Garland Church, circa 1875 were added; the interior and exterior wood was painted, the church roof was re-shingled, and missing stained glass was replaced. If it were not for citizens like Grace Moore recognizing the significance of this building and acting to save it, a hamburger stand would be in its place today.

The church is now 131 years old, with all its original architectural features intact. Only grout, small pieces of stained glass, the weathervane, and the roof shingles have been replaced, a basement added, and modern plumbing, heating, and electricity installed. To maintain its original beauty, the interior walls and wood, as well as the exterior wood moldings have been repainted several times. In addition, the building still functions as a church on Sunday, and it provides a historical and picturesque location for weddings, public tours, and Christmas concerts, as well as a meeting and archival storage site for the local genealogical society and the Historic Preservation Association. It has functioned as a church continuously, except during times of renovation or transfer of ownership.

This picturesque, dignified landmark is significant as the only remaining single spire, English Gothic church in Fort Scott as well as a monument to the pioneer spirit and values of its people, then and now.

**Chronological History of First Congregational Church**

|            |   |
|------------|---|
| 01/12/1869 | First Congregational Church trustees chosen   |
| 02/28/1869 | First Congregational Church organized with 12 members                                 |
| 1869-1874  | Rev. J.C. Plumb formally installed as minister; presides until May 1874               |
| 10/25/1870 | City lots 2 and 4 first purchased by First Congregational Church from L. C. Reutchler |
| 08/20/1871 | Wood frame church dedicated   |
| 03/14/1872 | First Congregational Church's wood frame structure destroyed by fire                  |

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**Significance, Continued**

03/16/1872 Work on temporary 32 x 60 ft. replacement structure began; finished by Sunday  
Aug. 1872 Construction began on present, brick structure, under auspices of Mssrs. Chumlea and Mikesell  
Sept. 1873 Present structure completed  
Feb. 1874 First Congregational Church dedicated  
1874-1876 Pastor P. J. Warner presides over congregation of 147 members  
04/06/1877 Pastor A. T. Waterman presides  
1879 W. W. Montgomery was pastor  
1883 Rev. George S. Bradley  
1885 Rev. H. A. L. King  
1888-1889 Rev. W. J. Gray  
1893 Rev. Charles N. Queen  
1896 Rev. A. O. Penniman  
1898-1902 Rev. H. E. Mills  
12/12/1900 Lot 2 of church property sold to W. J. Moore  
12/11/1902 W. J. Moore sold Lot 2 and the north half of lot 4 to Congregational Church for \$1  
1905 Rev. C. A. Pillig was pastor  
1909 Rev. A. O. Penniman presides  
1911 Rev. H. A. Tucker presides  
04/17/1914 Property sold by Congregational Church to Congregational Church Building Society of New York  
1916 Rev. W. F. Harding presides  
1918 Church roof and steeple re-shingled in-kind with wood shingles  
12/13/1919 Property sold by Congregational Church Building Society to Kirk S. Moore  
07/20/1920 Property sold by Kirk S. Moore to Brethren Church  
08/06/1936 Steeple painted  
04/22/1941 Property sold by Brethren Church to Missionary Board of the Brethren Church  
04/14/1961 Property deeded back to Brethren Church with stipulation that it must be consistently used as a church by a congregation  
06/25/1970 Donald W. Henderson of the Kansas State Historical Society inspected the property and declared it a "very unusual, very gothic building."  
1973 Brethren Church outgrows building and puts it up for sale to finance building a new church; prospective buyer intends to raze the structure and build a hamburger stand. Grace Moore heads a campaign to save the church from demolition.  
1974 Historical Preservation Assn. of Bourbon County was formed as part of restoration effort.  
1975 Church roof replaced in-kind with wood shingles; restorative work done on windows by a St. Louis, Missouri firm. Windows dedicated to donors.  
05/20/1978 Property sold by the Brethren Church to The Historic Preservation Society of Bourbon County  
03/12/1985 Steeple repainted; finial removed for refabricating. Work done by MidContinental Restoration; financed by Historic Preservation Assn. of Bourbon County

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**Significance, Continued**

- 03/07/1986 Replica of original weather vane placed on pinnacle of steeple by KG&E, financed by Clifton C. Otto as a memorial to his parents
- 03/21/1987 Church steeple re-shingled by MidContinental Restoration; financed by Historic Preservation Association of Bourbon County
- 05/31/01 Kansas State Historical Society declared the property a significant cultural resource that should be preserved and encouraged HPA to pursue a nomination to the National Register of Historic Places.
- 2002-03 Church roof and steeple re-shingled with asphalt shingles in "weathered wood" design.



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Oral history as told to Judy Howser by Arnold Schofield, Fort Scott National Historic Site Historian, and Don Miller, past President of Historical Preservation Association of Bourbon County.



UTM Coordinates  
First Contour Line  
Church  
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